

Can We Read the Signs of God?

I have been wrestling with a life changing decision over the last three weeks about whether I should retire or not. If I were not to retire, I would have to go through a political campaign for the judgeship I have held for the last 18 years. Throughout this three-week period, I have consulted with many people and have done an abundance of prayer. As the three weeks progressed I continued to get signs as to the direction the Lord was leading me.

First, a candidate announced he was running against me and I had to decide whether the campaign was something I really wanted to go through. This made me reflect upon where I wanted my life to go in the next 6 years.

The next sign was the direction the campaign was taking from day one. Several years ago, I decided not to continue doing weddings as a judge when the law changed allowing same-sex marriages. They were making this an issue. You see, I was one year away from being ordained to the diaconate and this would be in conflict to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Less than a week later I was offered a job with a well-established law firm in the valley. The new law firm is very supportive of my diaconate ministry.

At a family meeting, my family told me they didn't want to see me go through this process again. Our family had been through a very nasty election process earlier in my judgeship. At the time, I lost almost 40 pounds from the stress. We were not sure we wanted to go through that again. Another sign?

Through prayer, myself and my family made the decision that I would retire and take this new opportunity. I was reading God's signs for me that it was time

to move onto the next challenge in my life. Do we always read these signs correctly? No. But we are given signs from God, we just need to recognize them. I really feel that this journey has been God's way of bringing me closer to Him.

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord. This celebration is the reality in history of salvation; the appearance of God in concrete and visible form to the people.

The appearance of God in our midst is an invitation to search for Him. This is the main message of this day. This invitation to search for our Creator was greatly manifested in the attitude of the wise men in the Gospel reading of today; **“we saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.”** If God had never wanted us to seek Him, He would not have appeared in our midst in the first place. If God had never wanted us to seek Him, He would not have given us signs and traces that will lead us to Him. For the wise men, it was a star that led them to the place of His solemn presence. They trusted the star to lead them to the Messiah. Keep in mind, this was not a one or two-day trip. The wise men's journey was probably a two to three months journey to greet the child Jesus. The Gospel reading today tells us they greeted Jesus in a house, not the manger. Another sign of the passage of time. The Magi were clearly intent on meeting the Messiah.

The First Reading speaks of the beauty of this heavenly sign, it says, **“upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears His glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you.”** This beauty is the greatest force of attraction that must catch the attention of any soul on a journey to God; This is the attraction

which God's appearance brings about on the face of the earth. We can also be attracted by this great light today.

We just need to recognize what this great light is in our lives each day.

When Saint Paul experienced the force of attraction of this beauty, his whole life was changed and he was able to abandon everything like the wise men in search of the source of this beauty; God's presence. Obedient to this force of attraction, Saint Paul wrote in the Second Reading, **"it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery of God's promise."**

What we are celebrating today is not just the visitation of the wise men and the appearance of God on earth signaled by a star over two thousand years ago. We are celebrating the many ways in which God continues to signal His presence in our midst, reminding us to follow these signs that will surely lead us to Him. The star led the wise men to where Jesus was. We need to follow our star whatever form it takes. Through prayer and discernment, we can journey to God using all the signs given to us in our daily lives.

We have signs in our midst today that surely can lead us to Him. The sign of the Word of God, the sign of the Church, the sign of the Saints, the sign of our fellow human beings, the sign of the Sacraments which are celebrated in our midst. The list can go on forever. We just need to recognize the signs. If a single sign was able to lead the wise men to Jesus; how much luckier are we to have these many signs pointing us to the Lord. I can tell you, 15 years ago I would not have recognized all of the signs God was giving me to make this decision. But, in creating a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, I have learned to **obey and trust** the signs God is giving me. As a result, my relationship with Jesus is

growing more every day.

May the graces of the Solemnity of the Epiphany keep us firm in recognizing the signs on our journey to God. We know that if we but recognize the signs, that God will constantly manifest Himself to us each and every day. **Don't miss the signs in your life!**